

## PHIL UA-2: Great Works in Philosophy

NYU, Spring 2016

**Instructor:** Alex Worsnip ([alex.worsnip@nyu.edu](mailto:alex.worsnip@nyu.edu))

**Class Meetings:** 5 Washington Place #302, Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:30-10:45am

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays, 11am-1pm, 5 Washington Place #504, or by appointment

### Course Description

This course is two things at once: on one hand, an introduction to some classic works of philosophy, and on the other, an introduction to the art of reading, understanding and philosophically engaging with historical works of philosophy and “canonical” thinkers as interlocutors in an ongoing philosophical conversation. We will focus particularly on classic works of social and political philosophy, but it will be an aim of our course to set these ideas in the context of the systematic philosophical doctrines about knowledge, reality, thought and language, out of which they grew.

### Course Materials

There are nine set texts, which have been ordered into the NYU bookstore. Since there are a lot of books, I have tried to select affordable editions, but one or two are more expensive, and I regret the cumulative cost. (In some cases, cheaper copies can be found online, e.g. on Amazon, but if you order your books this way, be sure to get the correct edition/translation as listed below.) On the positive side, you will leave this course with a nice foundation of a library of great works of political thought and political philosophy, and I hope these books (unlike most of the academic books you have to buy) will be ones that you will enjoy reading and return to after our course is long over. Here is the list, in the order we’ll read the texts, with the abbreviations used in the schedule of readings in bold:

- Plato, *Republic* (trans. Grube, revised by Reeve; Hackett) (**R**)
- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (ed. Curley; Hackett) (**L**)
- John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (ed. Laslett; Cambridge UP, 3rd ed.) (**TTG**)
- Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman and a Vindication of the Rights of Men* (Oxford UP, Oxford World’s Classics edition) (**VRW**)
- J.S. Mill, *On Liberty, Utilitarianism and Other Essays* (Oxford UP, Oxford World’s Classics ed.) (**OLUOE**)
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Basic Political Writings* (trans. & ed. Cress, Hackett, 2nd ed.) (**BPW**)
- Karl Marx, *Selected Writings* (ed. McLellan, Oxford UP, 2nd ed.) (**SW**)
- W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Oxford UP, Oxford World’s Classics ed.) (**SBF**)
- Alain Locke, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke* (ed. Harris; Temple UP) (**PAL**)

There will also be a number of supplementary readings outside of these texts; these will be posted on the NYUClasses site for the course.

### Requirements/Assessment

- **Participation.** Including attendance of all classes, having done adequate preparation AND participation in discussions. See the Class Policies for more detail. 15% of grade.
- **Regular short-answer reading comprehension question sets,** to be completed at home. 20% of grade (all together).
  - Question Set 1 (on Plato) due Wed, 2/10, 11:59pm.
  - Question Set 2 (on Hobbes) due Mon, 2/22, 11:59pm.
  - Question Set 3 (on John Locke & Wollstonecraft) due Wed, 3/9, 11:59pm.
  - Question Set 4 (on Hume & Mill) due Wed, 3/30, 11:59pm.
  - Question Set 5 (on Leibniz, Kant & Rousseau) due Wed, 4/13, 11:59pm.
  - Question Set 6 (on Marx) due Mon, 4/25, 11:59pm.
- **Papers (prompts will be provided):**
  - Paper 1 (on Plato or Hobbes; 1000-1500 words; 15% of grade): due Sun 2/28, 11:59pm.
  - Paper 2 (on John Locke, Wollstonecraft, or Mill; 1000-1500 words; 15% of grade): due Sun, 4/3, 11:59pm.
  - Paper 3 (on Rousseau or Marx; 1500-2000 words; 20% of grade): due Fri, 5/6, 11:59pm.
- **Test/exam** (on James, Du Bois, and Alain Locke). To be held Thursday 5/12, **8am-9:50am**, in our usual room. Primary texts are permitted in the test, but other materials (such as lecture notes) are not. 15% of grade.

## Class Policies

See the separate class policies sheet, which I have uploaded to the Resources folder of the NYUClasses course page. This document really is essential reading. It contains lots of information about how to participate in the class effectively and responsibly, avoiding academic dishonesty and plagiarism, what I'm looking for in assignments, and more. You can likely get a much better grade in this class by reading and taking account of the rules and advice that it provides. It also contains information about my commitments to you, including accessibility and disability accommodation information.

## Schedule of readings (TENTATIVE – subject to change)

*(Note: although I've divided the class into four very crude "parts" below, you shouldn't think of the boundaries between these parts as sharp. One could put Hobbes together with Plato in part one as pre-liberals; one could pair Rousseau together with Hobbes and Locke as united by their social-contractarian approach; one could put Marx together with the pragmatists and Du Bois in part four as radicals reacting against the metaphysics of rationalism. The very categories that are used to unite or separate these thinkers are, almost without exception, contestable, and I hope you'll think about them critically, coming to your own conclusions about the complex relationships between these texts.)*

Tues 1/26 (Introduction.) Read syllabus and class policies.

Thurs 1/28 No class (I am away at a conference) – rescheduled for 5/10

## Part One: Ancient Foundations: Plato's *Republic*

Tues 2/2 Plato, *Republic*, Book I, Book II up to 376e, Book III 412b-414b (**R** pp. 2-52, 88-90)

- Thurs 2/4 Plato, *Republic*, Books IV and V (**R** pp. 95-156)  
 Tues 2/9 Plato, *Republic*, Books VI and VII (**R** pp. 157-212)  
 Thurs 2/11 Plato, *Republic*, Books VIII and IX, Book X 608b-end (**R** pp. 213-63, 279-92)

### Part Two: Empiricism and Classical Liberalism

- Tues 2/16 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, introduction and chs. I-IX (**L** pp. 1-50)  
 Thurs 2/18 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chs. X-XVI (**L** pp. 51-105)  
 Tues 2/23 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chs. XVII-XXI, XXV-XXVI, ch. XXXI §41 (**L** pp. 106-45, 165-89, 243-4)  
  
 Thurs 2/25 John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, selections (on NYUClasses)  
 Tues 3/1 John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, chs. I-V, VI up to §65 (**TTG** pp. 267-311)  
 Thurs 3/3 John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, chs. VII-XI (**TTG** pp. 318-363)  
  
 Tues 3/8 Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, introduction and chs. I-III (**VRW** pp. 71-120)  
 Thurs 3/10 Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, chs. IV, VI, IX, XI and XIII (**VRW** pp. 121-49, 191-7, 221-31, 235-40, 266-83)  
  
 Tues 3/15 No class – Spring break  
 Thurs 3/17 No class – Spring break  
  
 Tues 3/22 David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, §2-3, 12 (on NYUClasses)  
 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book III, Part I, §1 (on NYUClasses)  
  
 Thurs 3/24 J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*, §I-II (**OLUOE** pp. 5-54)  
 Tues 3/29 J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*, §III-V (**OLUOE** pp. 55-112)  
 Thurs 3/31 J.S. Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, §II-III, VI-VII (**OLUOE** pp. 191-224, 249-283)

### Part Three: Rationalism, Radical Freedom and the Will

- Tues 4/5 Gottfried Leibniz, brief selection from the Preface to *New Essays on Human Understanding* (on NYUClasses)  
 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Introduction §I-VI (on NYUClasses)  
  
 Thurs 4/7 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (excluding the notes) (**BPW** pp. 45-92)  
 Tues 4/12 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, Books I-II (**BPW** pp. 156-90)  
 Thurs 4/14 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, Books III-IV (**BPW** pp. 191-252)

- Tues 4/19 Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question" (**SW** pp. 46-69)  
 Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts", sections headed "Alienated Labour" and "Private Property and Communism" (**SW** pp. 85-104)
- Thurs 4/21 Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, "The German Ideology" (**SW** pp. 175-208)
- Tues 4/26 Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, "The Communist Manifesto" (**SW** pp. 245-70)  
 Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme" (**SW** pp. 610-6)

Part Four: Pragmatism and the Philosophy of African-American Emancipation

- Thurs 4/28 William James, *Pragmatism*, lectures I-II, VI-VII (on NYUClasses)  
 Optional: Excerpts from Dewey and Addams (on NYUClasses)
- Tues 5/3 W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, chs. I-II, VI (**SBF** pp. 7-32, 63-76)  
 W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, selections (on NYUClasses)
- Thurs 5/5 Alain Locke, Essays 1-3 from **PAL** (pp. 31-78)
- Tues 5/10 Alain Locke, Essays 14, 16-19 from **PAL** (pp. 163-73, 187-236)
- Thurs 5/12 Final Exam  
**8-9:50am**